# Field/Trip Report

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**Name/s of traveler/s**: Melkamu Bezabih& Aberra Adie

**Dates and place of travel: 25 – 27March2014**–Lemo woreda Africa RISING Site

**Purpose/objective of the travel:**

* Farmers training
* Farmers experience sharing
* Farmers direct contacts/discussions with Doyogena sheep supplier cooperative

**Key people contacted (contact details):**

1. AtoWorknehDubale, Africa RISING Lemo site coordinator
2. AtoTamirat, LemoworedaOoA, Cop expert
3. AtoBirhanuErwaro,Lemoworeda Irrigation expert
4. AtoTesfayeHabiso, Areka Research Center, forage researcher
5. At NigussieKifle, HangachaworedaOoA, Livestock office head
6. AtoMulatu, Areka Research Center, Community-based sheep breeding coordinator
7. DAs and Farmers at Upper Gana, Jawe and Karakicho (Hangacha)
8. 8. Ato Addisu Abicho – Angacha Omo microfinances enterprise, head
9. Ato Kasa, Lemo Woreda Office of Agriculture, head
10. **Farmers field visits and experience sharing**

The field visit program was intended to create a platform for farmers in the Lemo Africa RISING sites (Jawe and Upper Gana Kebeles) to share experience from farmers in Angacha Woreda (Kerekicho Kebele) on the use and management of shallow wells and surface water for irrigation. Most farmers in Angacha Woreda have been practicing irrigation for several years and have developed their own practices and skills. Kerekicho is one of the kebeles of Angacha Woreda, where seven interested farmers have been participating in the irrigated fodder pilot project. In this Kebele, about 160 farmers use rope and washer pumps, which they received through loan, to lift water from shallow wells (depth up to 21 meters) and produce different types of vegetables. The farmers have created good market links that spans from the nearby towns like Hossana to Addis Ababa for their vegetable products. They plant vegetables targeting the season of the year when the supplies are low and the prices are high. One of these farmers in this village has become a licensed businessman for vegetable products. This farmer motivates and supports others to grow vegetables; he collects the products from individual farmers and supplies to Addis Ababa and surrounding town markets. Eighteen farmers from the Lemo AR kebeles, who received treadle and hip pumps, including five development agents, three Woreda experts, and two representatives from Doyogena farmers’ cooperative travelled to Kerekicho kebele and visited the fields of the farmers. During the field visit, the visitors listened explanations of host farmers on seedbed preparations, vegetable seedling productions, transplantations, water use, market links, and vegetable production calendars. They raised questions and discussions were made base on the questions. The visitors were very much impressed on the way ground water and surface water is used for vegetable production by their Kerekicho counterparts. They said “our Kerekicho colleagues have smaller plot of land than ours; but their broader mind and skill enabled them to generate much better farm output than ours. We are highly motivated with this visit, because it showed us that if we work hard and give due attention to the resources we have, we can increase our farm income significantly”. Farmers in Kerekicho raise vegetables seedlings in nurseries at their backyards and transplant them to large fields (in hectares) on their own land and some rented in farms. Ato Girma, who was a retiree of the previous regime military, has adopted irrigated vegetable production from other farmers around Hosana is now producing vegetables in large fields of his own farm and rented in farms. He also sources seeds and collects products from other farmers to sell in Hosana and Addis markets. Girma’s brother who tried to migrate to South Africa and failed after incurring a lot of expenses, made his mind and jumped in to Vegetables production like his brother. He is no owning a substantial amount of resources (Assets), rents in land in large sizes to produce vegetables. The Lemo farmers compared the performance of the irrigated fodder growth in Kerekicho with their own fields and admitted that Kerekicho farmers have managed the fodder in a much better way than theirs, and vowed to do more to increase the biomass yield in the remaining growth periods. The visitor also noted the ease with which water is lifted using rope and washer pumps despite the higher depth of the wells (18-21m), and raised questions about the possibility of replacing treadle and hip pumps they own with rope and washer pumps. They said that this would allow them to harness ground water at a deeper depth in Upper Gana and Jawe sites.

1. **Farmers Training**

After a half-day field visit and experience sharing, the visitors and the host farmers were taken to Angacha town, where a half-day training was given on improved forage production, utilization, sheep selection, feeding and management. A meeting hall with the necessary facilities was provided by Angacha Woreda Administration Bureau for the training. A forage researcher from Areka research center, Doyogena community-based sheep selection coordinator and ILRI Addis staffs provided the training on the above mentioned topics. The different possible options to produce animal feed with the available land and resources were presented and thoroughly discussed. On the utilization aspect, explanations were given on how farmers should mix improved fodder with the locally available feed resources mainly crop residues for a better animal response. In between the training, discussion points were raised by both farmers and facilitators and valuable ideas were exchanged among the participants. Some farmers shared their experiences on improved forage production; for instance one of the farmers mentioned that he has a unique forage at his backyard (named “Yegojamater”) than what has been mentioned by the trainers and he wants to share the seed to researchers for further evaluation; the researchers planned to visit his field in the near future. ILRI forage fact sheets for seven forages (in Amharic and English) were distributed to the farmers and development agents for further information and follow ups.

1. **Sheep acquisition and market**

Representatives of the Doyogena sheep breeders’ cooperative explained to how they are organized and operating to improve the genetic potential of the local sheep genotype (Doyogena) through selection and breeding. Breeding rams are selected and distributed to member farmers (one ram to 30 households) and the farmers are obliged to castrate all other males to avoid unwanted mating. The new born lambs are weighted right after birth and ear-tagged. The growth of the lambs is monitored through regular weight measurements, and best performing males are selected to be future rams. Necessary precautions are taken to avoid inbreeding in the process. The representatives mentioned that this breeding practice resulted in significant improvement in the birth weight (about 2.5-3.0kg – initially; upto 6 kg at the moment) as well as the growth performance of lambs. They mentioned, at the moment they have around 80 rams which have finished their breeding service and are ready to be sold for fattening (8 months to one year old), and they could supply these sheep to the farmers participating in the irrigated fodder project. They mentioned that they could also supply other types of animals as demanded.

A thorough discussion was made on this point. Participant farmers mentioned that castrated sheep fetch higher prices when brought to market, and usually customers look at the size of the testicle before deciding to buy. They therefore would prefer castrated sheep for the fattening. Representatives of the cooperative also assured that they can deliver castrated sheep if they agree on the details of the specific requirements and conditions. The ILRI staff informed farmers that they should prepare money for the purchase of the sheep in the coming 2-3 weeks. Farmers were urged to buy the sheep in cash, and those who are unable to fully cover the cost should at least prepare 50% of the total cost. The remaining would be covered through loans from the local credit and saving association – Omo Microfinance.

The field visit and training was successfully completed with participants expressing their satisfaction with the program.

1. **Discussion with Omo Microfinance and Woreda Office of Agriculture**

After the completion of the training and field visit, the ILRI staff discussed with the head of Lemo Woreda Office of Agriculture about the possibility of facilitating credit for farmers who may be in need of cash to buy sheep for fattening. In the discussion, the ILRI staff explained to the officer that as a research institute ILRI would only support farmers by giving training and facilitating the testing of new technologies/options intended to increase the productivity of farm households, and that there would be no free delivery of inputs in the process. It was mentioned that this is also in line with the government’s policy to avoid any dependency syndromes. The officer was happy with the current efforts and would cooperate and write a letter to the credit and saving association to facilitate the delivery of loan to the farmers.

We further had a discussion with the Woreda Omo Microfinance branch office. After explaining the pilot project initiative, we forwarded questions if and how credit can be made available for the farmers. The head of the branch office said that it is possible to provide the farmers with credit as required, provided that they don’t owe unpaid money to Omo Microfinance. He explained that the Microfinance has a regulation that it does not provide a second credit to farmers before they finish paying back the money they owe from a previous credit. This regulation was put in place not to weaken the capacity of farmers to pay back their debts. We advised Ato Workneh (AR site coordinator) to check who owes money to the Microfinance, and how much they owe. For farmers who have not completed paying back their debt, we discussed, as an option, about the possibility of paying overdue debt at once and get access to a new credit for this pilot project. The site coordinator took the responsibility to talk to farmers with the different options.

**Key decisions and outcome/s:**

* As the irrigated fodder is now almost ready for use, purchasing of sheep needs to be completed as soon as possible
* The AR site coordinator should identify those farmers who can buy sheep in cash, those who need credit and those who are entitled to take credit to facilitate the sheep acquisition.

**A way forward/ recommendations/suggestions:** Key suggestions that came out from the discussion include the following:

1. Commence FEAST assessment at Kerekichokebele (FEAST work for Jawe and Upper Gana completed)
2. Finalize AR protocol for the pilot project
3. Initiate Irrigated Fodder trial in other AR sites



**Photo 1: Farmers briefed about the field visit**





**Photo 2 &3: Farmers visiting irrigated fodder & vegetable plots**



**Photo 4: Farmers in the training session**



**Photo 4: Group photo**